

## South Dakota State University Open PRAIRIE: Open Public Research Access Institutional Repository and Information Exchange

---

University Archives

Finding Aids

---

3-27-2018

# R.F. Kerr Papers

SDSU Archives and Special Collections, Hilton M. Briggs Library

Follow this and additional works at: [https://openprairie.sdstate.edu/finding\\_aids-university](https://openprairie.sdstate.edu/finding_aids-university)

---

### Recommended Citation

SDSU Archives and Special Collections, Hilton M. Briggs Library, "R.F. Kerr Papers" (2018). *University Archives*. 157.  
[https://openprairie.sdstate.edu/finding\\_aids-university/157](https://openprairie.sdstate.edu/finding_aids-university/157)

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Finding Aids at Open PRAIRIE: Open Public Research Access Institutional Repository and Information Exchange. It has been accepted for inclusion in University Archives by an authorized administrator of Open PRAIRIE: Open Public Research Access Institutional Repository and Information Exchange. For more information, please contact [michael.biondo@sdstate.edu](mailto:michael.biondo@sdstate.edu).

# R.F. Kerr Papers

## Finding Aid

South Dakota State University Archives and Special Collections  
Briggs Library (SBL) Room 241 Box 2114  
1300 North Campus Drive  
Brookings, SD 57007  
Phone: 605-688-5094  
Email: [arcrefs@sdstate.edu](mailto:arcrefs@sdstate.edu)

## Collection Summary

### *Identifier*

UA 53.6

### *Title*

R.F. Kerr Papers

### *Creator*

R. F. (Robert Floyd) Kerr

### *Dates*

1881-1931

### *Extent*

0.84 linear feet -- 2 document cases

### *Language*

English

### *Repository*

South Dakota State University Archives and Special Collections, Hilton  
M. Briggs Library, Brookings, South Dakota.

### *Access note*

This collection is open to researchers without restrictions. The materials in the Archives do not circulate and may be used in-house only.

### *Preferred Citation*

*Name of item.* R.F. Kerr Papers. UA 53.6. South Dakota State University Archives and Special Collections, Hilton M .Briggs Library, Brookings, South Dakota.

### *Abstract*

R.F. Kerr was librarian at South Dakota State College beginning in 1885. This collection consists primarily of correspondence, diaries, and other writings from Kerr's life in South Dakota and elsewhere. Also includes items from his teaching career, including class records and items collected during his Japanese teaching experience. The bulk of material is correspondence.

## **Historical Note**

Robert Floyd Kerr was born April 12, 1850 at Sugar Grove, Indiana. He attended Wabash College and later DePauw University, where he graduated in 1877. After teaching in Indiana for 2 years, he taught English and Mathematics at Hirosaki, Japan in 1879. Upon his return to the United States in 1880, Kerr taught again throughout the Midwest, settling finally in Brookings in 1885, where he was professor of political economy and Principal of the Preparatory Department. In 1892, he was ousted from the college and went to Illinois to work but he returned to Brookings in 1898, this time as Librarian and Principal of the Preparatory Department.

In addition to these roles, he also served as steward and manager of a boarding club, ran the men's dormitory and acted as advisor to the Dakota Agricultural Cadets, the military organization on campus. In addition to his work on the SDSU campus, Kerr was also active in Brookings. He was instrumental in founding the Forum, a men's association in town, and he was active with the Masons. In 1905, Kerr accepted a position as private Secretary to Governor Elrod. In 1911 and 1913, he served on the South Dakota legislature. In his later years, he lived in Brookings, edited a farm paper and remained active in many community organizations. He died October 16, 1921.

## **Contents Note**

This collection represents what can only be a portion of items from Kerr's personal files. They consist mainly of correspondence, but also include some diaries and writings, ledgers, class records and even Kerr's 1879 traveling papers for his stay in Japan. The bulk of the material is correspondence,

which is both personal and related to his work at the university. Some of the letters chronicle his dismissal from the university, which is an integral part of the early history of South Dakota State University.

## **Key Words**

Ethical Culture Club (Brookings, S.D.)

Harding, A. S. (Albert Spencer), 1867-1952

Kerr, R. F. (Robert Floyd), 1850-1921

Powers, W. H. (William Howard), 1868-1936

South Dakota State University -- History

South Dakota State University -- Libraries

South Dakota State University -- Presidents

World Disarmament Committee (Brookings, S.D.)

## **Administrative Information**

### *Conditions Governing Access*

This collection is open to researchers without restrictions. The materials in the Archives do not circulate and may be used in-house only.

Researchers conducting extensive research are asked to make an advance appointment to access archival material. Please call or e-mail prior to visiting the collection and indicate as much detail as possible about a particular topic and intended use.

South Dakota State University supports access to the materials, published and unpublished, in its collections. Nonetheless, access to some items may be restricted as a result of their fragile condition or by contractual agreements with donors.

### *Copyright note*

Copyright restrictions apply in different ways to different materials. Many of the documents and other historical materials in the Archives are in the public domain and may be reproduced and used in any way. There are other materials in the Archive carrying a copyright interest and must be used according to the provisions of Title 17 of the U.S. Code. The Archive issues a warning concerning copyright restrictions to every researcher who requests copies of documents. Although the copyright law is under constant

redefinition in the courts, it is ultimately the responsibility of the researcher to properly use copyrighted material.

*Arranged and Described by*

Elizabeth B. Scott, University Archivist, 1998 May 5.

## Container List

Box	Folder	Description	Date(s)
1	1	Certificate - Dept. of Public Instruction	1899
1	2	Christmas greeting (poem by Kerr)	1919
1	3	Class records	1885-1886
1	4	Class records	1886-1887
1	5	Class records	1887-1888
1	6	Class records	1891-1892
1	7	Correspondence	undated
1	8	Correspondence	1881-1885
1	9	Correspondence	1886-1889
1	10	Correspondence	1890-1891
1	11	Correspondence	1892
1	12	Correspondence	1893
1	13	Correspondence	1894, 1905
1	14	Correspondence - from A.S. Harding to Kerr re: Chalmers	1906
1	15	Correspondence - from I.D. Aldrich re: university presidents	1916
1	16	D.A.C. Cadets	undated
1	17	Diary	1886
1	18	Diary	1886-1888
1	19	Diary	1887
1	20	History of SDSC: 1881-1931 (Chapter 1 by Kerr, Marginalia)	1931
2	1	Kerr's Block Map and Manual of South Dakota	1906, 1913
2	2	Ledger	1888
2	3	Notes	1893-1894
2	4	Scrapbook	1885-1888
2	5	Traveling papers	undated
2	6	Writings - A Few words in favor of the Jews	undated
2	7	Writings - Autobiographical sketch	1887
2	8	Writings - College history	undated
2	9	Writings - Early history of Brookings County	1897 circa
2	10	Writings - History of Brookings County	undated
2	11	Writings - Trip to Europe	1891

